

[54] **METHOD, APPARATUS AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM FOR COMPANION INFORMATION AND NETWORK APPLIANCES**

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[21] Appl. No.: **09/181,431**

[22] Filed: **Oct. 30, 1998**

[51] **Int. Cl.⁷** **G06F 13/00**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **709/220**

[58] **Field of Search** 709/200, 205, 709/212, 218, 220, 222; 708/109; 455/550

[56] **References Cited**

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

The invention provides an information appliance and a network appliance (or telephone) that function independently as well as with each other as companion appliances. The information appliance stores user information corresponding to a particular user. The telephone is linked to network. In some embodiments, the companion appliances are capable of simultaneously exchanging voice and data messages with devices connected to the network. The appliances are connected to each other physically through a communications port, and exchange data link layer formatted data corresponding to user personalized information, commands from the user, and responses including message status information corresponding to action of the network connected devices. The user information enables the telephone to perform network communications according to user specified settings, and enables the telephone to assume the user specific information appliance network identification. The information appliance is typically a portable computer and in some embodiments is a palm-sized computer. In some embodiments, the telephone is an Ethernet telephone. One aspect of the invention provides a method for transmitting data from a portable computer to a telephone. Other aspects of the invention include: a method for exchanging voice and data messages between a telephone and devices connected to a network, a portable computer adapted for connection to a telephone, a telephone adapted for connection to a portable computer, and a communications system including the telephone connected to the portable computer.

75 Claims, 26 Drawing Sheets

